
CLINICAL NOTES

MESSAGE AS AN ADJUNCT TO MEDITATION IN THE PSYCHOLOGICAL TREATMENT OF CANCER

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In the treatment of cancer by meditation the patient is led into a profoundly calm state of mind in which thought practically ceases. Talking alerts the patient and prevents this process. Massage can be used as a simple form of communication to help the patient towards this state of mind. Massage can also be used as an adjunct in teaching the cancer patient to transcend frustrations, discomfort and pain, and so reduce the level of anxiety.

There is now evidence that cancer growth can be influenced by a form of intensive meditation (Meares, 1976, 1978, 1979). Simonton *et al.* (1978) report similar experiences in the psychological treatment of cancer. The theoretical basis is that a profound and sustained reduction of anxiety increases the patient's own defences against cancer through its effect on the immune system. This paper concerns the use of massage to help patient's meditative experience towards this end.

To be effective the reduction of anxiety must be both profound and prolonged. There must be a continuation of the effect of meditation into the patient's day to day life. In order to facilitate this effect of meditation the patient is encouraged to meditate in different postures and in different situations. Hence it does not appear strange to the patient to meditate lying naked on the examination couch covered loosely by a sheet or towel while being gently massaged.

MESSAGE AS COMMUNICATION

There are different forms of meditation (Meares, 1978). The form which has proved effective in influencing cancer growth involves a regression to very simple mental functioning with a comparative absence of thought and intellectual activity (Meares, 1977). This means that in helping the patient into this state I cannot communicate by the logical use of words. If I use words to explain what I want, I alert the critical faculties and intellectual activity, and the whole process fails. For the most part, communication in teaching the patient to meditate is by unverballed phonation and by touch with the hands on the shoulders, chest and abdomen as the patient sits meditating in a big chair. Touch when used in this way is a pre-verbal communication, somewhat similar to that of mother and child. I find that occasional sessions

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which combine massage with meditation can add to this process. With massage the communication becomes more intense. The patient's stillness of mind is more complete and the regression to simple mental functioning is so much the greater.

This process is really a matter of communicating to the patient in very simple fashion what is to be expected. But another aspect of communication also enters into it. As I show the patient how to meditate, I myself participate in the process. I too relax and become profoundly calm. As the massage proceeds the patient senses this from the touch and comes to participate in the calm of my own mental state in a way that could not be communicated by any logical use of words.

MESSAGE AS A LEARNING EXPERIENCE IN TRANSCENDENCE

For the meditative treatment of cancer to be effective by its influence on the immune system, the patient must come to live his daily life without reacting to frustration or stress by anxiety or aggressive feelings. The patient lives an active life, but also one of profound inner calm. An example of this state of mind is a patient who used to cough up blood with specules of bone without any discernable reaction of anxiety. He has subsequently gone on to make what appears to be a complete recovery. Massage can be used as a learning experience to help bring the patient to this state of mind.

In this form of treatment the cancer patient must come to live an everyday life without any over reaction to inconsequential stimuli. In order to maintain a low level of anxiety the patient must learn to transcend the ordinary frustrations, great and small, of everyday living, and must also learn to transcend discomfort, pain and sexual frustration.

While being massaged the patient meditates to let stillness come to the mind. Minor disturbing stimuli such as any sense of embarrassment at

MASSAGE & MEDITATION

nakedness or any erotic sensations from the feeling of touch on the body are readily transcended. I move the arms and legs, and I see from the face that this minor frustration in no way disturbs the inner calm. I can then be rougher, and still the inner calm is undisturbed. In this way, meditation combined with simultaneous massage becomes a pre-logical learning experience in the transcendence of frustration. This effect is used in some schools of Japanese massage in which the masseur keeps the patient's mind still and regressed by gentle massage with one hand, while with the other hand peripheral nerves are stimulated by rolling them between the fingers. These principles can be carried still further by having the patient actually meditate while being massaged. The effect on the cancer patient is that massage in this fashion helps the low level of anxiety which is attained in sessions of meditation to continue into ordinary life. It is the effect of this on the immune system which aids the patient's natural defences against cancer.

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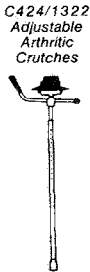
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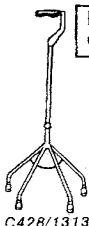
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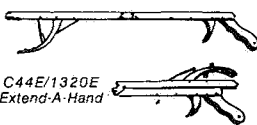
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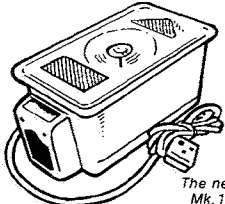
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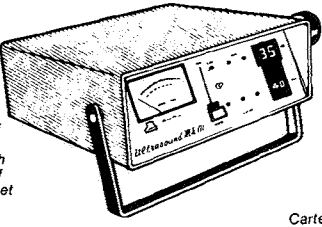
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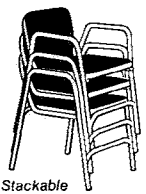
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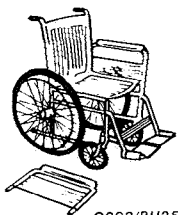
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